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USSR-CUBA: Brezhnev evidently has postponed his visit to Cuba from the end of this month to mid-January.

The official joint announcement last July--made a few days after conclusion of the US-USSR summit--said that Brezhnev would arrive in Cuba in late December, in time to attend the Castro regime's 15th anniversary celebration. A Soviet Foreign Ministry official has now told the US Embassy in Moscow, however, that Brezhnev will be going to Cuba about January 15.

Reports of a change in Brezhnev's plans began circulating in Moscow last weekend as Cuban Deputy Premier Rodriguez was leaving the Soviet capital to return home. Rodriguez, Havana's primary negotiator with the Soviets, ostensibly was in the USSR for talks on bilateral economic cooperation, but his primary purpose was to finish preparations for the Brezhnev visit.

It is possible that Rodriguez could not assure the Soviets that Castro would refrain from harsh anti-US statements during the ceremonies. Aware of US sensitivity to the Cuban situation, and that the 15th anniversary proceedings might get considerable media coverage in the US, Brezhnev may have thought it prudent to avoid any implication that he was associating himself with Castro's statements.

Havana probably is not happy over the delay, since it implies that Moscow is downgrading Cuba's importance. Rodriguez indicated as much in his Moscow departure statement, noting that Cubans are "awaiting impatiently" the Soviet party leader's visit.

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\*SPAIN: The death of Prime Minister Carrero Blanco yesterday complicates General Franco's carefully laid succession plans and compounds the uncertainties of the post-Franco era.

Vice Prime Minister Fernandez-Miranda, who automatically assumed Carrero's post in an acting capacity, is a leading candidate for a permanent appointment. As a close associate of the slain leader and an advocate of his restrictive political policies, Fernandez-Miranda can be expected to carry on the regime's policies. He has not, however, been known--as Carrero was for so long--as Franco's chosen successor as chief of government, and he would be more likely to be challenged by others wanting the post. Although the constitution provides that within ten days Franco must name a new prime minister for a 5-year term, the Caudillo may wish to continue Fernandez-Miranda on an acting basis for a longer period.

In view of the possible threat to law and order implicit in an assassination, Franco may conclude that the premiership should go to someone further to the right than Fernandez-Miranda. A possible compromise choice would be the president of the Cortes, Rodrigues de Valcarcel. If a military choice is deemed advisable, General Manuel Diez Alegria, chief of the High General Staff, is a possibility. Franco might even decide to reassume the post himself.

The other part of Franco's succession plan remains intact. Prince Juan Carlos, whom Franco named in 1969 as king-designate, is still slated to become chief of state when Franco dies or is incapacitated.

The timing of the attack on Carrero--approximately an hour before the opening of the trial of ten leftist labor leaders--suggests that his death was caused by extremists. The blast occurred about half a mile from the court where the trial was to take place. The trial was suspended temporarily, but late reports indicate that it resumed in the afternoon.

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A tight security cloak has been thrown over the city. All police have been recalled from holiday leave, and the Spanish security service will probably be rounding up known extremists of all political persuasions.

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\*Because of the shortage of time for preparation of this item, the analytic interpretation presented here has been produced by the Central Intelligence Agency without the participation of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense.

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CHILE: The junta appears to have the security situation well in hand, but it is concerned that its opponents will attempt to refocus international attention on Chile with headline-making activity over the holiday period.

Strict security measures remain in effect nationwide, including spot searches of travelers on trains and buses.

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The left, however, still is far from ready to launch a concerted guerrilla-terrorist campaign, but extremists probably are capable of mounting a few spectacular operations. The greatest danger may come from the current wage-price squeeze, which has placed traditional Christmas amenities beyond the reach of many Chileans and could lead to a serious increase in resentment of the government's economic policies.

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ZAIRE: The government announced on December 18 that it will nationalize foreign-owned petroleum distribution facilities.

The announcement was made shortly after President Mobutu returned from the Middle East, where he obtained guarantees from Algeria and Libya that Zaire will be able to buy its petroleum products directly from these countries for the next five years. Mobutu apparently feared that the Arab oil embargo would force the distribution companies to divert supplies from Zaire to countries facing oil shortages.

Nationalization will affect Texaco, Shell, Mobil--all with sizable US participation--and the Italian firm Petrofina. It will include all storage depots and pipeline and other distribution facilities. The government's announcement that the takeover will be negotiated implies that the firms will be compensated and that they may be asked to continue providing much-needed management and technology. In the meantime, the government has ordered the firms to continue their operations, and company officials are reacting calmly.

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South Vietnam:

the Communists initiated more incidents on December 20 than on any day since last March. Most of the activity--chiefly shellings and terrorism--took place in the delta. The actions could have been aimed at showing Communist strength prior to Secretary Kissinger's meetings with Le Duc Tho and at marking the 13th anniversary of the founding of the National Liberation Front.

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Czechoslovakia-Afghanistan: Prague has extended \$20 million of development aid to Kabul. This is the first credit received by the Daoud government from a Communist country.

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*\*These items were prepared by CIA without consultation with the Departments of State and Defense.*

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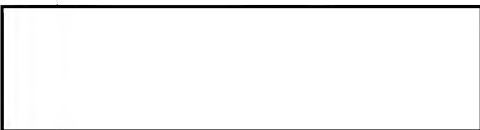
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